

16 October 1972

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : What Would a Cease-fire in Place Look Like Now?

1. As of 16 October, a cease-fire in place would (a) give the Communists control of the territories in South Vietnam which their main forces now occupy, and (b) give the Communists some claim to certain territory around Saigon where they have been increasingly active in the past week to ten days. Under the (a) category, we would as a minimum have to concede to the Communists de facto control over roughly three quarters of Quang Tri Province, much of the uninhabited territory of western MR 1, the western parts of Kontum and Pleiku Provinces in MR 2, the northern half of Binh Long Province in MR 3, a Communist base area in Dinh Tuong Province of MR 4, and certain parts of the lower delta (particularly in Chuong Thien Province and the U Minh forest area. In addition, we would probably have to concede, after discussion and argument, certain "leopard spots" in northern Binh Dinh Province of MR 2 and in the southern provinces of MR 1 near the coastal lowlands.
2. Under the (b) category above -- the territory around Saigon ~~the~~ the situation is changing from day to day because fighting is presently underway in the area. It is unlikely that the Communists can achieve anything like a ~~breakthrough~~ breakthrough around

Saigon. The danger is that the Communists, a few days before accepting a cease-fire, may make a major effort to occupy territory, and then claim that they are entitled to much more than would be the case if the fighting continued for several more weeks. They may also try this approach (of major attacks a few days before they plan to accept a cease-fire) in other areas of the country -- in fact, a substantial number of intelligence reports could be interpreted as meaning ~~exactly this~~ *that this is exactly what the Communists are planning to do.*

3. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Militarily, the present "highpoint" of enemy action -- just now getting under way -- is probably the last round of major attacks which the enemy can launch in 1972. There is reason for a fair amount of confidence that the ARVN, with VNAF and U.S. air support, can beat back these attacks -- though the ARVN, as in the past, may initially give some ground. From the point of view of the resulting military situation (and very definitely from the viewpoint of GVN sensibilities), it would be better to wait until after the present highpoint has ended before accepting a cease-fire. Otherwise, from the military and security standpoints, we are playing into the enemy's hands. ~~Given~~ Given the enemy's awareness of the upcoming U.S. election, it is very likely the enemy's intent and hope that we will play into his hands in this fashion.

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : Could the GVN Live With the Resulting Security Situation
If a Cease-fire in Place were Accepted Now?

1. The short answer to this question is no. The GVN could not live with the security situation ~~fx~~ resulting from a cease-fire in place, ~~right now~~ until the military situation around Saigon has stabilized. And it is ~~almost certain~~ probable that the military situation around Saigon will stabilize -- in the GVN's favor ^{within} the next four to eight weeks. At present, however, most and perhaps all of the major highways radiating outward from Saigon are interdicted or in danger of being interdicted. Right now, on what is almost certainly a strictly temporary basis, the Communists could lay claim to stretches of these highways and the surrounding territory. A few days or one week from now, the situation ~~may~~ (in terms of territorial control) may be less favorable to the GVN than it is today. Only if there were a cease-fire within the next month, however, would the Communists be able to maintain their present positions around Saigon.

2. Except for the situation around Saigon, the Thieu government probably could live with the security prospects arising from a

cease-fire in place now, although Thieu's arm would have to be twisted mightily to induce him to accept such a cease-fire. If, in the next ~~few~~ days, the present enemy "highpoint" gets underway and ^{temporary} allows the Communists to take/control of certain territory around other South Vietnamese urban centers in addition to Saigon, the GVN's security prospects in a cease-fire would be even bleaker than they are now. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ To reiterate, the present enemy highpoint probably cannot last more than four to eight weeks, and the security situation of the GVN after a cease-fire would almost certainly be more favorable at that time than it would be now.